Extraordinary Session

Executive Council of the African Union

Opening Statement

His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, and Mauritanians Abroad

Addis Ababa, 15 March 2024

Excellencies, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and members of the Executive Council,

Excellency, Mr. Moussa Faki Mohamed, Chairperson of the African Union Commission;

Excellency Madam Vice-Chairperson of the African Union Commission;

Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen, Distinguished Commissioners;

Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen, Ambassadors, Permanent Representatives;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by conveying the profound emotions that accompany the honor and pride felt on the occasion of my country's appointment to preside over the African Union for the year 2024. This responsibility is undeniably weighty, particularly given the uniquely delicate context in which it arises.

In this regard, I wish to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to advancing our shared African ideals, aligning with the interests and aspirations of our peoples, and embracing the ambitions of our esteemed continent.

My deepest congratulations extend to my predecessor, H.E Mr. DHOIHIR Dhoulkamal, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Union of the Comoros, whose leadership has undeniably been a tremendous success.

I express profound gratitude to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, and his dedicated team for their invaluable contribution to the preparation of this significant meeting.

I am honored to extend these tributes to my esteemed brother and friend, His Excellency Mr. Taye ATSKIE SELASSIE, the distinguished Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia. Through him, I convey my heartfelt appreciation to the government and people of Ethiopia for their gracious hospitality and unwavering efforts to ensure the success of this meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The unprecedented wave of conflicts and challenges currently engulfing the international and regional stage demands a resolute and thoughtful response to further strengthen consultation and the pooling of our efforts. Our common values dictate this; our deep awareness of a shared destiny compels it. The enormity of the challenges we face requires it, transcending even the nobility of the goal we aim to achieve.

To assert that our ambition – " an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in International arena." – may seem somewhat distant in the current temporal circumstances, where the continent grapples with multifaceted

challenges. However, we remain steadfast in our belief that such a vision is not permanently beyond reach for united peoples, possessing vast natural resources, dynamic youth, and an ambitious vision.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our vision for the future of our continent is intricately linked to our fervent belief in the African Union – a union that cannot exist without us, by us, and for us. Such a union cannot be materialized without our deep commitment, active presence, and the strength of our partnership.

The African Union is not merely a forum for exchanging ideas or forming transient partnerships; rather, it is a collective project founded on three essential pillars that constitute the foundation of our shared vision.

The first pillar lies in our ability to adapt and be flexible in the face of transformations at both the African and global levels, fostering our integration into the world while zealously preserving our specificity.

The second pillar resides in our ability to exhibit resilience and preserve cohesion in the face of numerous challenges, both internal and external.

The third pillar is illustrated by the acuity of our imaginative and inventive spirit concerning our power of proposition. Our continent must not merely be an actor on the global stage but an active participant. We are now called not only to present but to defend our own solutions, ideas, and innovations, contributing dynamically to the emergence of a better world.

It is crucial to emphasize that the African Union is not a mere arithmetic operation, finding its solution through the trivial sum of our countries and regions. It is the result of our interaction, partnership, and brotherhood, aimed at building together a stronger, more united, and more prosperous Africa.

As a result, we must continue our efforts in developing the institutions of the African Union to provide the grounds for the full discharge of our responsibilities, contributing to the strengthening of our integration and unity, and realizing the legitimate aspirations of our peoples, as outlined in Agenda 2063.

In this context, our meeting today comes precisely one month after the regular Executive Council meeting in February.

As you are aware, this meeting is tasked with exploring the most suitable ways and means to elect senior officials within our Commission, in line with the mandate given to us by President of African Union, His Excellency Mr. **Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani**, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Allow me to remind you that the process of selecting the team that will lead the AU in 2025 for four years should be defined, I believe, by prioritizing considerations of cohesion, equity, rationality, and a spirit of consensus.

I cannot conclude without paying tribute to the excellent work accomplished by the Permanent Representatives Committee in preparation for this extraordinary session.

At the conclusion of my address, I implore us to foster a sense of unity and redouble our efforts in addressing the myriad challenges confronting our continent.

I declare the proceedings of our meeting open and extend my best wishes for the success of our deliberations.

Thank you.